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Statement of purpose

Taking stock of the universe of positions and goals that constitutes Leftist politics today, we are left with the disquieting suspicion that a deep commonality underlies the apparent variety: What exists today is built upon the desiccated remains of what was once possible.

In order to make sense of the present, we find it necessary to disentangle the vast accumulation of positions on the Left and to evaluate their saliency for the possible reconstitution of emancipatory politics in the present. Doing this implies a reconsideration of what is meant by the Left.

Our task begins from what we see as the general disenchantment with the present state of progressive politics. We feel that this disenchantment cannot be cast off by sheer will, by simply "carrying on the fight," but must be addressed and itself made an object of critique. Thus we begin with what immediately confronts us.

The *Platypus Review* is motivated by its sense that the Left is disoriented. We seek to be a forum among a variety of tendencies and approaches on the Left—not out of a concern with inclusion for its own sake, but rather to provoke disagreement and to open shared goals as sites of contestation. In this way, the recriminations and accusations arising from political disputes of the past may be harnessed to the project of clarifying the object of Leftist critique.

The *Platypus Review* hopes to create and sustain a space for interrogating and clarifying positions and orientations currently represented on the Left, a space in which questions may be raised and discussions pursued that would not otherwise take place. As long as submissions exhibit a genuine commitment to this project, all kinds of content will be considered for publication.

Submission guidelines
Articles will typically range in length from 750–4,500 words, but longer pieces will be considered. Please send article submissions and inquiries about this project to editor.platypusreview@gmail.com. All submissions should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

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About the Platypus Affiliated Society
The Platypus Affiliated Society, established in December 2006, organizes reading groups, public fora, research and journalism focused on problems and tasks inherited from the "Old" (1920s–30s), "New" (1960s–70s) and post-political (1980s–90s) Left for the possibilities of emancipatory politics today.

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Have we unlearned how to learn?

1968 and today

Erin Hagood

This article was originally given as a teach-in at Columbia University and at the New School occupation in April 2024. It is published here with minor revisions. It also builds on a teach-in and article in the Platypus Review *I wrote in August 2022, "SDS and the Legacy of the New Left today."*[1]

ON APRIL 17, 2024, the students of Columbia University's "Apartheid Divest" coalition, led by Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace, erected an encampment, a "liberated zone" with posters copied straight from the Columbia occupation of 1968. As this encampment began, Columbia's President Shafik was sitting before congress to testify about the rise of antisemitism on college campuses. When she returned to campus, President Shafik ordered the destruction of the encampments and the arrest of over 100 student protesters. Since then, the campus has been closed to visitors amid continuing protests, including protests by faculty and the eviction of a new encampment. The students have demanded financial transparency, divestment from the war in Israel and Gaza, and (ironically?) a boycott of Israeli intellectuals and students through the Tel Aviv University exchange program, among other newer demands, such as amnesty for arrested students and a commitment to academic freedom.

The occupation of campus has seemed to many to be a "spontaneous" uprising of students, followed by similar "spontaneous" acts of solidarity from campuses across America, and now spreading across the world, so I hear, in Austria, France, Australia, and elsewhere. Such "spontaneity" would seem to defy theoretical understanding, but it is also misleading, for even spontaneity has its context — men make history, but not in the conditions of their choosing.

The radical posture of the protests are, in effect, preparing the way for the anti-Trump, anti-fascist popular front incorporation of the radical students into electoral politics. This cycle was born in the 1930s and repeated itself in the arc of the New Left from 1964 to 1972. This talk will focus on the student protests of 1968, to which the current protests make a specific analogy.

Perhaps counterintuitively for a protest movement with such slogans as "We can't get bogged down in analysis" or "Whoever occupies himself with theory, without acting practically, is a traitor to socialism,"[2] I am going to start our inquiry with two "professors" — Marxists Herbert Marcuse and Theodore Adorno. In their private correspondence about the 1968–69 student protests, they debate the relationship of the New Left radicals to the politics of the 1930s. Adorno is often considered a pessimist and critic of the New Left, not only for his written criticisms of the student movement, but for calling the police on students occupying and disrupting his lecture in Frankfurt in 1969. Following this incident, students continued to protest with the somewhat infamous "titty attack," in which naked students waved their breasts in his face while throwing tulips on his head and chanting, "Adorno as an institution is dead!," forcing Adorno to cancel his disrupted lectures for the rest of the semester.

Herbert Marcuse, though originally sympathetic to Adorno, became quite critical of him after speaking to one of the Frankfurt student protesters about the incident. Though Marcuse agreed with Adorno that the police can and should be called, even by a Leftist, if the occupation threatens to descend into violence or to destroy property and items necessary to the continuation of education, he felt Adorno should not have called the police on students. Adorno, of course, claimed that such a threat was exactly why he had taken such a measure. But they quickly realized that the heart of their disagreement had in their youth — back in the 1930s and 40s — faced a similar demand to "act" and had opposed it. Adorno replies to Marcuse:

> The strongest point that you make is the idea that the situation could be so terrible that one would have to attempt to break out of it, even if one recognizes the objective impossibility. I take that argument seriously. But I think that it is mistaken. We withstood in our time, you no less than me, a much more dreadful situation — that of the murder of the Jews, without proceeding to praxis; simply because it was blocked for us. I think that clarity about the streak of coldness in one's self is a matter for self-contemplation. To put it bluntly: I think that you are deluding yourself in being unable to go on without participating in the student stunts, because of what is occurring in Vietnam or Biafra. If that really is your reaction, then you should not only protest against the horror of napalm bombs but also against the unspeakable Chinese-style tortures that the Vietcong carry out permanently. If you do not take that on board too, then the protest against the Americans takes on an ideological character.[3]

As Atiya Khan wrote in her 2009 article for the *Platypus Review*, titled "The decline of the Left in the 20th century: 1968," the unification of praxis with a "non-existent theory" by the protestors recalled a "similar demand to "act" and had opposed it.

Adorno articulated the crux of their controversy:

> "You [Marcuse] think that praxis — in its emphatic sense — is not blocked today; I think differently." The two men, now teachers of the New Left with a large influence on the protesters around the globe, had in their youth — back in the 1930s and 40s — faced a similar demand to "act" and had opposed it.

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To call the protests of 1968 "Left fascism" was indeed optimistic, for, following Wilhelm Reich, fascism has a progressive aspect. For Adorno, the complete identification with the machine in reified "actionism," through which the subject is disciplined completely to the capitalist means of production, in reaching its outer limit would pose once more the question of subjective ends. For what does one develop the *ratio*[5] of action? The liquidation of the party, which mediated rational means with the end of freedom, severed the umbilical cord between theory and practice, obscuring the task of freedom. Nevertheless, the authoritarian personality complex of the students, which celebrates unfreedom, may have been an opportunity for discovering the task of freedom contained within universal unfreedom — but only if the latter could be recognized.

The protests of 1968 imagined themselves to be a progressive overcoming of the Stalinist Marxist Left of the 1930s, but what if it were only a further regression? What if the apparent "radicalization" of the Left were actually a repression of the political crisis, but one in which the Left, instead of evaluating the legacy of the 1930s Stalinism, reproduced those very structures and tendencies it sought to overthrow.[6]

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was "regressive," justifying and alibiing the status quo it claimed to disrupt while blocking the creation of an authentic critical theory. Marcuse took issue with this formulation — for he felt "Left fascism" was a "contradiction in terms" and that the self-contradiction of the Left could not lead to it becoming its opposite — the Right. Marcuse said that although it was not a revolutionary or even pre-revolutionary situation, theory might be pushed further by praxis, and that this was what was happening in the thoughtless "actions" of the student protestors — not the thoughtlessness of fascism, but a praxis that could lead to further thought.

rallies, but also in the Popular Front movements, as well as in the anti-colonial, nationalist movements of the Third World. Frankfurt School theorists, including Adorno, theorized the notion of the "authoritarian personality" as a double-sided expression of counter-revolutionary and simultaneously, revolutionary potential that was rooted in the dialectical contradiction of capitalism. Borrowing from Freudian psychoanalysis, Adorno and his colleagues (Marcuse and Reich) interpreted the constitution of the "authoritarian personality," characterized by "narcissism" and sadomasochism, as evincing a regressive "fear of freedom." Thus, faced with "political hysteria" Adorno observed, "Those who protest most vehemently are similar to authoritarian personalities in their aversion to introspection." Certainly the 1960s marked a

"Leave the global South to itself"

An interview with Mohamed Khalifa and Osama Saeed

D. L. Jacobs, Artendy Malik, and Lucy Parker

On March 16, 2024, Platypus Affiliated Society members D. L. Jacobs, Artendy Malik, and Lucy Parker interviewed Sudanese Communist Party members Mohamed Khalifa and Osama Saeed. An edited transcript follows.

Artendy Malik: When did you join the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP)[1] and why?

Osama Saeed: I joined in 1991, while in secondary school. Even though it was after the collapse of the Soviet Union, in Sudan we had the Islamic front military coup d'état in 1989. There was massive opposition to the coup from pro-democracy parties within the student movement. The SCP played a vital role within the student movement in schools. My father was a Communist and then became a right winger anyway. I took it from there. To oppose the Islamists with a pro-democracy movement, within the student movement.

Mohamed Khalifa: I joined the SCP in 1995, when I was in my fourth year of medical school. Before that the SCP had alliances — we called them "fronts" — with the democrats who also agreed with the SCP program; their main aim was to lead in a non-capitalist way. There was a democratic front in all universities in Sudan, and most of the members who joined from universities or secondary schools usually started by first joining the democratic front, which was the alliance between the Communists and the democrats. I joined the students' democratic front first in 1993 and later joined the SCP.

I was studying economics in secondary school and we read about the West European experience and Eastern Europe, but I was interested in English history with the Labour Party, the conservatives, and the mixed economy. So I was more pro-"socialist" at that time. But, the SCP is the spearhead of the Left in Sudan, so I joined the SCP in 1996, during university.

D. L. Jacobs: What was the Party like when you joined? You mentioned that the SCP had been around for decades and a significant history since the beginning of the independence of Sudan (1956). Osama mentioned the coup of 1989, so there was a democratic opposition. How was the SCP thinking about its past and present?

MK: It's important to recall the background of the establishment of the SCP in 1946. That was before Sudan's independence. The Party's founding was influenced by two groups. One group was the Egyptian communist movement. Within it was Henri Curiel, a Jewish Italian man, who started some circles of communism in Egypt, although the party in Egypt was established before that, in the 1920s. But it wasn't that prominent until the 1940s, when Curiel established the Democratic Movement for National Liberation. At that time the Sudanese who went to Egypt for their studies, started the first early stages of what we call the Sudanese Movement for National Liberation. But at the same time there was a circle in Sudan who had been influenced by some of the British army officers who were communists, and had brought books by Marx and Lenin and so on, like Herbert Storey, who was a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. During that period the SCP was founded in the late 40s.

The first period during the struggle for independence which lasted from 1946 to 56, the party line was "self-determination for the Sudanese people." This political line was directed against the line that was pro-Egypt, which called for unity and union with Egypt at the same time there was another line who was pro-Britain. The SCP adopted a third way: self-determination. During this period the SCP was recruiting from the new professionals, students, and most importantly the rising working class. Because Sudan mainly depends on agriculture, the working class was not well established at that time. However, the first nuclei of trade unions was established under the influence of the SCP. The Party was highly successful in organizing the railway workers in Atbara, a city in the center of Sudanese railways. In the 1950s, the Sudan Workers Trade Union Federation became one of the strongest trade unions in the Middle East. That was established under the influence of the SCP. The party was also able to have a strong influence on the tenants association in Gezira, which was the main cotton-grower trade union in the 50s and the beginning of the 60s. The SCP had a considerable number of members and sympathizers in vital sections of Sudanese society, but mainly the members were students from universities or secondary school.

OS: From what I understand, the question is, what is the *type* of organizational tasks or political activities that the SCP had after the coup? We've been through a period of the most repressive sort of dictatorship in the world because it's a theocratic dictatorship. Their main flag is jihadism, and their jihad is against the communists. They knew well the communist influence among students and organized sectors of the workers, either working-class trade unions or professional trade unions, etc. They started crushing the Party straightaway: mass arrests; people put in prison by the hundreds during the first four years of the military coup. The SCP went underground, and the party had a long experience in doing so. It started to function through the underground structure which was based in work, resident, and student branches.

Students are always the spearhead and the flame of the people's movement. So they always will be in the forefront within the confrontation against the government or the security apparatus, such as the police. There will always be a protest about the student union having problems, student campaigns about their residences, etc. In the University of Khartoum where Mohamad studied, in the first three years they had four students murdered by members of the Islamic Front.

There was a general strike called by the trade unions to oppose the coup. There were elected trade unions which had been disbanded by the coup. The strike was called by the Doctors Union before it spread out to others. They crushed the strike. Ali Fadul, our first trade-unionist doctor and Party full timer, was tortured and killed in 1991. We had to work underground, away from the student branches and democratic fronts within the students. This was the climate: intimidation, arrests, etc. The Party was secretly producing and distributing the *al-Midan* newspaper. The main leadership and cadre of the SCP were in prison.

MK: We were witnesses of the background of the Party in the 90s because we were there. Before that, the SCP had a major setback in the early 70s, the impact of which continued into the 80s.

Lucy Parker: Is it true that the SCP decided to run not as a communist party in 1953?

MK: Yes, that's right; at that time it was the Anti-Imperialist Front.[2] The reason is that the country was still traditional. The prominent parties were traditional, religious, etc. It was hard for society to accept a new party with a new ideology. That's one of the reasons the SCP decided to broaden the alliance against imperialism.

OS: The election of 1953 was about independence. The country was run by British colonialism, and they had a smart way to rule the country: they called it a condominium, and it was ruled over by the British and Egyptians. The agreement for Sudan's independence came about after Gamel Nasser, et al., led the Egyptian Revolution of 1952. It was agreed that Sudan will be for the Sudanese, and it will have self-determination, etc. After independence, the SCP declared itself to be communist. Until then, it had been part of the anti-imperialist front, in which many people participated — not just communists. We managed to get a member of Parliament elected at that time.

MK: Sudanese independence was achieved in 1956, and after only a few years of democracy there was a coup in 58. That was the second phase of the history of the SCP. During this period the Party defended its power based on the opposition to the military regime; it joined the front of opposition parties, which included former civilian political parties. More importantly, the SCP had a dominant position in trade unions in addition to student and professional organizations, which enabled the Party to call the general strike that brought down the military regime during the so-called October Revolution in 1964.

After this regime was brought down, the SCP was unable to take advantage of its enhanced position between 1964 and 69. During the first general election in May 1965 the Communists won 11 seats, including the first woman elected. Although it wasn't a big number, it was significant for a communist party in a traditional society.

With the rising communist tide, the Muslim Brotherhood (at that time the Muslim Brotherhood was relatively new) launched a campaign against the SCP, accusing the Party of being an atheist and anti-Islamic organization. This campaign ended with the SCP being outlawed in November 1965. In an effort to work around this ban, the Party nominated some members as independents in the 1968 elections, and secured two seats. Then on May 25, 1969, there was another military takeover by the Free Officers,[3] spearheaded by Gaafar Nimeiry. In that period there was a split in the SCP concerning what stance the Party should take.

DLJ: I understand that the Egyptian experience and maybe the Indonesian experience — namely the Egyptian and Indonesian Communist Parties being smashed by their respective nationalist Free Officers — had an influence on the debates within the SCP.[4] The Soviet Union's program at the time was considering how communist parties might relate to "progressive nationalists" or the "progressive bourgeoisie": should the parties be subordinate to them? Should they be in a mass front together? Should there be a separate party?

MK: This is an important question because the May 1969 military coup bears resemblance to what happened in Egypt and some other Arab countries, where free officers took power and adopted socialist policies, expecting the communist and Marxist parties to become subordinate to them. That was one of the reasons for the division within the SCP in September 1970, as one faction supported the revolutionary army movement due to its "progressive" and "anti-sectarian" character. Additionally, some of the members of the SCP were appointed as ministers. The other section, led by the Party secretary Abdel Khaliq Mahjub, condemned the 1969 military coup in general and pursued the SCP's previous goal of establishing a broad national democratic front in which the SCP would retain its independence rather than dissolve in the union. So these tensions between the regime and the SCP arose to the extent that Nimeiry announced his intention to destroy the Party, dissolving the Communist-dominated student, women, and youth organizations as well.

To preempt this expected repression, SCP officers, such as Major Hashem al-Atta, launched a "counter-coup" on July 19, 1971. They arrested Nimeiry, and declared Sudan a democratic republic. However, due to a lack of preparation and strong Libyan and Egyptian intervention, the coup failed after three days. The Communist leaders were arrested and executed, including Abdel Khaliq Mahjub, El-Shafi Ahmed el-Sheikh, Joseph Garang, alongside Major al-Atta, Colonel Babikir al-Nur Osman, and Major Farouk Hamadallah.

DLJ: You said that Muammar Gaddafi's government in Libya intervened on the side of Nimeiry.

MK: Yes. At that time, Colonel Osman and Major Hamadallah were here, in London, for a health check-up, when they were appointed by Major al-Atta to the new revolutionary council. Gaddafi dispatched fighter jets to force down the British airline jet carrying these new leaders.

OS: Let's talk about the debate within the SCP, about the way forward for the revolution itself and the rule of the Free Officers and their pact of Arab-nationalism. The Free Officers were within the Sudanese army. They were maintained by Arab nationalists: some were Nasserists and others were SCP members. But, the debate goes back within the Party itself, back after it was made illegal and Members of Parliament were arrested. There were public debates within the Party's central committee between Abdel Khaliq Mahjub and Ahmad Sulayman about the way forward. Sulayman was publicly calling to "follow the Egyptian road and have a military coup: this is a civil dictatorship and we have to lead a revolution to rule the army," etc. That debate took root, and spread to the army officers as well. The Arab nationalists were aiming for military coups. We as communists think that the Arab nationalists — Ba'athists[5] or Nasserists — don't believe in the revolution building from the bottom up. They believe in straightaway, petit-bourgeois military coups to get to power. Then some among them fight for power, and it continues.

When the split happened, the vote was 12 to 13; 13 were against dissolving the Party within the military coup and wanted to maintain the SCP independently to continue the revolutionary task among the working class from the bottom up. Others went with the coup. This split resulted in the July 1971 coup, which had been controversial within the Party until recently, and it had led to the Party leadership's confusion within the army, within the political wing, and to the arrest of thousands of communists for years. It was a massive debate about Arab nationalism and the way forward, and the role of the army within the revolution and army officers and stuff like that. That weakened the SCP very much. It's still building itself up; it took years to rebuild.

LP: This ideology of a uniquely "Arab socialism" has had a lot of purchase in different contexts. We had an article a number of years ago in the *Platypus Review* looking at the history of the Ba'athist Party in Iraq, versus the Iraqi Communist Party, and obviously Nasserism is another example of this, in Egypt.[6] Does the SCP have a critique of Arab socialism as a uniquely Arab — as opposed to an international socialist — project?

OS: Yes. I was discussing it earlier with another comrade. These ideas came up within the Arab communist movement in the 1930s. Later on Michel Aflaq, the founder of the Ba'athist Party, picked it up from there, and called it Arab nationalism and socialism, etc. As the Communist Party in Sudan, we say, yes, we are a part of the Middle East, but Sudan is unique.

Don't forget, straightaway we had the "Southern question," as it used to be called, in Sudan. The question of South Sudan, and how it would be incorporated after independence, after its suffering through the colonial era by what the British called the "South Sudan Ordinance Act," which closed areas of the South totally from the North, etc. As Sudanese Communists we were not enticed at all by so-called Arab socialism. No. We were more towards an International sort of socialism than the Soviet Union version of it. But even within that, for example, at the 1967 conference, we had documents titled, "Marxism and Sudanese Issues." In many chapters we talked about Arab liberation movements, and African liberation movements and whether we should work together in solidarity towards building a socialist society in Africa or in the Middle East. But this wasn't spoken of in terms of any kind of nationalism. As Sudanese Communists, we are the main enemy of all the Arab nationalists — the Ba'athists, the Nasserists, et al. We were not a part of that at all, politically or theoretically.

DLJ: You were talking about 1971, which led to mass repression. Years of work building up the mass movement amongst trade unions, among peasants. When we think of a party, we think of it as a repository for historical knowledge: that these different moments in the Sudanese Communist Party, could be passed down. One of the reasons I asked about how things were in the 1990s is because I was wondering how history was received. How did people reflect on 1971, 1969, and earlier? How did they learn what ought to be done, from the 1990s onward? How was this history taught to young cadres?

OS: Because of secret organizational rules, there was dysfunction. There is therefore no proper archive being kept or passed down. With this legacy, one of the main issues was a lack of writing. Much of it has been passed down through Party talks, experiences, storytelling, along with drinking sessions and conversation. We'd talk about mistakes in organizational tasks, etc. Within the student movement, they did write about their experiences, and they would give these texts to new members — mistakes to be learned from, etc. Most of the Party's archive is safe in Holland, at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam.

MK: Yeah, but at the same time, the Party has reflected on what has happened during the coup in 1971. And they referred to the coup in 1971 as a "corrective measure." Later on, the Party released a document stating clearly that this had been a coup, and that the Party should continue the struggle from the bottom up, rather than this route, which was ill-prepared and fatal. The main motive of the SCP members was that they felt threatened by Nimeiry, but that wasn't the right way to correct things.

DLJ: First it was called a corrective measure, and now it is called a coup?

OS: There was a move to call it a coup. It was a political stance. They used a very Arabic phrase: "we don't deny" or "we don't claim" a coup. That was the stance until the uprising in 1995, then the document came out, saying that that it was a "petit-bourgeois military coup" perpetrated by "the Right," and that the way of the Party is through "building the masses" and "working in the masses from the bottom up." So that was the stance. It was a call against the dictatorship, for the Party members to maintain solidarity and strength — that they not be crushed by the death of the leadership and imprisonment of thousands of them.

MK: During the early 1990s, although the Party was working underground, some of the members had been forced to leave their country, to Europe, Egypt, etc. That's when they started opening general discussions among Party members, especially after the fall of the Soviet Union. There was open discussion, even about the internal structure of the Party, about democratic centralism, about the way forward. That was a healthy discussion, which later paved the way for open discussion at the Fifth Congress in 2009. The Fourth Congress was in 1967.

AM: From the SCP's founding, through to the 1971 coup, to the Soviet Union's collapse, how was the relationship between the Party and the Soviet Union?

MK: After the 1969 coup, the Soviet Union encouraged the SCP to support the change and to accept the involvement of some Party members as ministers in the new cabinet. However, the main faction of the SCP was keen to maintain the Party's independence and was not in full agreement. The USSR had adopted a pragmatic stance against the 1969 coup. However, after the coup of 1971 and the execution of Party members, the Soviet Union strongly condemned it.

When Nimeiry returned in 1971, he took a different path, after having been a Leftist, or pro-Leftist; he shifted towards the United States, and from 1977 on he started adopting neoliberal policies. During that period the SCP was underground. And by the time of the 1985 uprising, when Nimeiry was overthrown, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union started to adopt *glasnost*[7] policies.

The SCP is a Marxist-Leninist party, and it maintained good relations with the Soviet Union. However, it didn't replicate European models. Recognising Sudan's unique context — predominantly agrarian and hence distinct from Europe — the Party recognized the need to adapt its ideology and agenda accordingly. Party leader Abdul Khaliq Mahjub held notably independent views in this way.

OS: It was a love-hate relationship with the Soviet Union. The USSR had their own views of the global South and of fighting U.S. imperialism. The USSR supported the first military coup in Sudan in 1958. Mahjub went and met with them. Even at that time Sudanese students had been sent messages from the SCP that anything might happen regarding this military dictatorship, and to be prepared. The SCP was not following the Comintern line.[8] That's why the USSR was not happy with the SCP and its leadership, even after 1971.

But, the SCP maintained the relationship in terms of sending students to study in the Eastern bloc — not just communist students, but whoever got access to these scholarships in Sudanese society. We didn't get arms from the USSR — just education, and sometimes medical care.

DLJ: You mentioned learning the lesson of building from the grass roots up, and you carried this method forward into the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s.

OS: To build a pro-democracy movement we're always building our Communist Party united front through the popular front. We bring even the Right-wing, religious base and parties into the popular front to defend democracy. Despite their religious and Right-wing political and economic programs, their base is the working class and poor farmers, along with the nomads and herders. So you have to bring them to you, if you want to build a mass movement for democracy, you have to bring them to you. We are not fighting to build a Left-wing, socialist front.

We worked on that throughout the 1990s, until we came to the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)[9] that functioned until 2003 — because the Americans were already designing the peace between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)[10] and President Omar Hassan al-Bashir's Islamic Government, a peace which was completed with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005.[11] The NDA was dissolved after that.

The hope was that the six-year transitional period of 2005–11 would be attractive enough for the South Sudanese people to work for unity. But that agreement was already done to separate the South. And after the South's separation, we've got to renew the struggle against the dictatorship in the North, led by the National Congress Party (NCP).[12]

We rebuilt another popular front called the National Consensus Forces.[13] And that carried on working until the 2019 Revolution.[14] We had been working within it. But there's a vital thing to think about here: we are established and we exist within all the public meetings, and all the party flyers and statements, to say that the dictatorship has to be brought down by a popular uprising, a general political strike, and civil disobedience. Building this front is necessary to do that. The contradiction within the front comes out of these Right-wing parties having their own political goals related to the regional and imperial power within Sudan.

DLJ: I brought up the 1969–71 moment because it seemed like the debate at the time was concerned with this question of mass democracy and the independence of the Party. How has that come to bear now regarding the 2019 Revolution and the present moment?

OS: It's always there! It's always this evil circle! The masses still don't hold their own agency in terms of maintaining and solidifying their power. So they always get sold out by the Right-wing leadership. And we always knew that! But you have to work within this contradiction. We often have this debate especially within the younger cadre in the Party: "Why do we always have alliances with the Right when they're always selling out the Sudanese people?," "Why shouldn't we work independently through our own democratic and united front?" Those parties, like it or not, have the masses among them, and the masses are supposed to be our supporters and members, but still they give their support to their religious sects, etc. In order to work among them, you work within a coalition of their leadership in the popular front in addition to working with the masses at the grassroots level. At the end of the day, we would be lying if we said that we'd lead it ourselves as the "Communists," because we don't hold the masses; the masses are not with us.

MK: The Party line now is looking for a radical change alliance, aiming to break this vicious circle of having an uprising and then divisions between the civilian front, leading to another coup, and then you build the grass roots, and then again the civilian front, etc. This is a vital question. That is why the Party now thinks that the way forward is to build an alliance at the grassroots level. Since 2019, the resistance committees have emerged. They are well organized, and they've been mobilizing the masses, especially after another coup on October 25, 2021.[15] We need to think about building alliances with trade unions, resistance committees, and different fronts, but at the same time we are not going to dismiss the Right-wing parties completely, because they still have the support of the masses.

LP: When doing grassroots organizing in Sudan, how do you address people's discontents? How do you critique the Right-wing groups? Do you critique Islam?

What would you say to the Left elsewhere in the UK or the U.S.? There's often confusion about how to build a critique of Right-wing, Islamist political movements. This comes from an anti-imperialist perspective on the Left. In Western countries there's a reticence to critiquing Islamist groups. What would you say to Western Leftists about that?

OS: On the first part, I wish you could speak Arabic so that you could hear how much we confront those bastards in Sudan. We are not shy about it; we confront them at the public meetings, student meetings, and all sorts of fronts. We criticize them publicly and absolutely — no retreat. Period.

We differentiate between the role of religion in people's lives and political Islam, or even other Right-wing sects that use religion for Sudanese politics. That's why they still fight us as an "atheist" political faction: we are disorienting society, making it an "infidel," irreligious society — all this propaganda about communism from the mid-20th century is still being used.

Our generation, especially in the universities, grew up dealing with the harshest period of Islamism. The National Islamic Front in Sudan tried to be the leader of the Sunni world, because it was a Sunni government starting in 1989. The Islamic Front declared jihad against us. They came at us on the university campus with knives, iron bars, pistols, and AK-47s. We have no excuses not to defy them on all fronts — physically, theoretically, politically.

Concerning the Left in the West, I understand the case of imperialism, colonialism, and Islamophobia: they think you have to stand by these religious organizations. For example, when we met with People Before Profit[16] in Ireland, they asked us about our stance on Hamas. And I said to them, they're bastards! Totally bastards! We've faced them in Sudan, they've been in Sudan since the early 1990s. They trained there; they tortured Sudanese people; they participated in Sudanese violence — we're familiar with this kind of organization.

We support the Palestinians struggle, not Hamas's struggle. The Palestinian people's struggle for liberation, armed struggle, peaceful democratic struggle, whatever. But, if the Palestinian people themselves elected Hamas, that's the Palestinians' people's choice! It's not up to us to decide. But it's not a clean sheet to support Hamas or Hezbollah, because these kinds of organizations have a bloody history within their own people. Hezbollah in Lebanon: they killed the communists. They killed them. And it's called a "resistance movement" — whatever.

So, for the Western Marxists, I want to tell them, fix your bloody Left issues in Britain or whatever, and leave the global South to itself. They'll sort themselves out; they are answering their own questions and leading their own revolutions. In Britain, since 1921, there has been no general strike, let alone a revolution. Yet they like to teach people, the colonial minds, "this is the way forward, and the revolution has to be like so," and their "uneven-and-combined-development" Trotskyist perspective — despite not knowing what's going on in Africa.

DLJ: How does one justify the need for a *communist* party? The whole fear of being in a popular front is not simply working with the Right wing, but that you would dissolve into the front. The need for a communist party would be rendered superfluous or redundant — why have a party if we're in a mass democratic movement? How do you approach the question of the necessity of a communist party?

OS: We make it clear to all members, and they understand it well, that participation with the popular front does not mean that we become absorbed in it. No! The Communist Party maintains its independence; it maintains its independent organizational and political activity. For these fronts to function properly, they depend on the Communist Party's independence among the people — expressing the people's voice, having an opinion on every political, economic, and social issue. Those Right-wing parties in the front won't budge. They would destroy it without us. The SCP maintains itself because it maintains its independence. Even with the dictatorship and in its secretive way, the Party paper has to be published, and we speak out in any chance we have. We have internal, semi-public meetings under the dictatorship. We hold our meetings in houses, with 50–60 people there, and you talk to them about the Party's political lines. To maintain the Party, its independent Party lines need to be heard by the people. We have our representatives in the front, but our main task is with the Party.

MK: For example, at the beginning, the SCP was a member of the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC).[17] In spite of us being part of the alliance, we issued our own statements and even criticized the FFC's agreement with the military council.

Let's return to the question of the Islamic Right wing. The Right wing in Sudan is a big umbrella. Some of them were part of the civilian alliances that supported democracy and were against the Muslim Brotherhood. However, the political Islamists of Sudan are different than elsewhere. In other countries, there was no real experience of Islamists coming to power. Even in Egypt, it was for a short period. In Sudan the Islamists are not anti-capitalist. From the first day, Sudanese Islamists had a very good relationship with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. They adopted all the structural adjustments of the World Bank. They had a good relationship with the CIA as well. They are not part of the resistance. Even in 1977, during Nimeiry's reign, the Islamists were part of the government alliance, when the Jewish diaspora came from Ethiopia, through Sudan, to Israel. The Islamists weren't anti-capitalist or anti-imperialist in any way.

AM: I would like to cover some events from 2005, specifically the independence of South Sudan from the North. There has even been a communist party that started in the South, the Communist Party of South Sudan (CPSS).[18] What is the SCP's stance regarding South Sudan: is it for or against it — and what about this new party?

OS: The independence of South Sudan is the same self-determination that was granted by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and we, as communists, believe in self-determination. However, the way it was designed, along with the general atmosphere, led to separation, which was the aim of the imperialist powers. They wanted to do as the Islamists and the right-wing leadership of the SPLA say in Sudan: we can't deny the southern Sudanese the right for their self-determination. We had to accept the result, but we still want Sudan to be unified. And we want a unified Sudan because what is happening is just continuous bloodshed in southern Sudan in terms of SPLA factions and tribal problems; it is bleeding out the resources of Sudan. Before Southern Sudan independence, 9% of its land was bought by agri-businesses. I don't know how much of it is owned, with the ongoing civil war in southern Sudan, but major Israeli agricultural companies are exporting from Sudan, and taking their products to Israel. Even with this war going on, Sudan is one of the biggest producers of coffee beans, but nobody mentions that within world trade, because it's smuggled. It's not accounted for immediately because it is cowboy capitalism.

We accepted the result because we didn't have anything else. In the early 1950s, when the question of independence came up, we called for self-governed South Sudan, as autonomous but unified with Sudan. We called for it to have special economic and social plans to develop it and to be incorporated within the political structure of Sudan, but the Right-wing party didn't allow it to happen — so now there's a Communist Party of South Sudan as well. SCP members working in the government, who returned to the South or were already there, established the CPSS.

The CPSS is weak because they've been crushed by the SPLA, along with tribalism and political factionalism, which are more dominant in South Sudan. That's why they are in a weaker position calling for South Sudanese unity, a pro-democracy movement, trade-union building, etc. The SPLA is doing the nastiest thing you could imagine. They crush you wherever they can, so there is no voice for a peaceful, democratic movement. The CPSS has built a popular front among civil society in South Sudan, but its voice is weaker there, where having bigger guns and bigger tribes gives one the stronger voice.

DLJ: Since 2019, how do you see socialism or communism as potentially providing a solution to the conflicts that have been happening? In other words, why pursue communism, as opposed to being a democrat? Why does one have to be a socialist or a communist?

MK: As communists, we analyzed the Sudanese problem through a Marxist lens, and concluded that the main issue is social injustice and the unequal distribution of wealth and power. This is a fundamental problem and a root cause of the ongoing conflict, regardless of whether it's a proxy war or not. The problem is inequality and social injustice. Some groups and parties believe this problem solely stems from the superstructure or culture, attributing it to Arab and Muslim domination, rather than focusing on economic, social injustice and wealth-distribution issues. Regional inequalities exacerbate the problem. Regarding the economy, we believe we shouldn't rely solely on loans but on our own resources. While we may need to engage with institutions like the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, we must strive for independence, with the government playing a significant role in the economy. Our ultimate goal is a non-capitalist economy, but we recognize the need to form a broad front initially. We advocate for a mixed economy with a substantial governmental role.

OS: We say to people that the ultimate solution is socialism, but we cannot simply jump to it out of this period when the country is engulfed in civil wars, tribalism, sectarianism, and divisions. We have to have a base of stability; even liberal democracy, with all its flaws, could be a base. Then you build and organize the working class. As Lenin says, liberal democracy, with all its issues, is the best way to organize the working class and to lead their political emancipation. It won't come without stability. It won't come with these wars happening. We have to maintain a politically stable system, rooted in the people, who can fight for their freedom and democratic rights. We'll take it from there to build the economic and social structure that will lead us to socialism. |P

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[1] Founded in 1946 as the Sudanese Movement for National Liberation (SMNL); it became the Sudanese Communist Party in 1956.

[2] Founded in 1952 by the SMNL.

[3] Also known as the Revolutionary Command Council. This coup was against the government of President Ismail al-Azhari.

[4] See Alain Gresh, "The Free Officers And The Comrades: The Sudanese Communist Party And Nimeiri Face-To-Face, 1969–1971," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 21, no. 3 (August 1989): 393, 396.

[5] The Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party (Iraqi-dominated faction) has a regional branch in Sudan, which was founded in 1970. The faction was founded in 1966 when the original Ba'ath Party split into two parties that retained the same name, with one party becoming established in Syria while the other was based in Iraq. The original Ba'ath Party was founded in Syria in 1947 by the merger of the Arab Ba'ath Movement, led by Michel Aflaq and Salah, and the Arab Ba'ath Party, led by Zaki al-Arsuzi.

[6] See Ian Morrison, "Ba'athism and the history of the Left in Iraq: Violence and politics," *Platypus Review* 3 (March 2008), available online at <https:/platypus1917.org/2008/03/01/baathism-and-the history-of-the-left-in-iraq-violence-and-politics/>.

[7] [Russian] Openness, transparency, etc. The term was used as a political slogan by USSR General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev in 1986.

[8] The Communist International, also known as the Third International.

[9] The NDA was a group of Sudanese political parties that formed in 1989 to oppose the new government of al-Bashir.

[10] The SPLM is the political wing of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which was founded in 1983 as a guerrilla movement against the Sudanese government. The SPLA is now known as the South Sudan People's Defence Forces.

[11] Also known as the Naivasha Agreement, this accord was signed on January 9, 2005. This was an agreement to end the Second Sudanese Civil War. A referendum took place on January 9–15, 2011 concerning the independence of South Sudan, and it was decided that it would become an independent state on July 9, 2011.

[12] Founded in 1998 by key figures of the National Islamic Front. The NCP was banned by the Sovereignty Council of Sudan after the military coup of 2019. The National Islamic Front, Founded in 1976 and led by Hassan al-Turabi, influenced the Sudanese government starting in 1979 and through the 1990s. In 1999, President al-Bashir expelled al-Turabi from the NCP; al-Turabi founded the rival Popular Congress Party in the same year.

[13] Formed in 2010 as a group of Sudanese political parties that sought to compete against the NCP in the elections of that year.

[14] In the 2019 coup, the Sudanese Armed Forces overthrew the government of al-Bashir.

[15] In this coup, the Sudanese military, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, took control of the government, and placed Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok under house arrest. Hamdok was reinstated, after al-Burhan signed a political agreement, on November 21, 2021.

[16] Founded in 2005 by members of the Socialist Workers Party (UK), People Before Profit is a political party active in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

[17] The FFC was founded on January 1, 2019, during the 2018–19 Sudanese protests, as a coalition of civilian and rebel groups opposed to the government of al-Bashir.

[18] The CPSS was founded in June 2011.

of a student-only gym in Harlem. According to Mark Rudd, this action and the subsequent "barricade" erected by the students in Hamilton Hall "radicalized" the "white, middle-class" Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), of which he was a leader. The "oppressed" in the form of black people in America and the third-world guerillas in Vietnam and elsewhere, according to Rudd, took the "vanguard role" and awakened the students to their opposition to the system.[6]

However, the SDS students did not want to disconnect themselves from the "base" of students by remaining behind a barricade, so they set up a separate, "white" occupation. They had learned, according to Rudd, from black-power activist Stokely Carmichael that "blacks and whites must organize their own."[7]

This so-called radicalization of the SDS and the organizational form it took in segregated occupations was not spontaneous, but had been prepared by the history of the SDS and the New Left's role in the Civil Rights Movement.

Founded in 1960, Students for a Democratic Society was a catch-all for refugees of the New Left, a generation of young radicals and Leftists who felt they could not find a home in either the aged and anti-communist Socialist Party or the Stalinized Communist Party. Its prominent leaders, Michael Harrington (who would later go on to found the DSA) and Bayard Rustin, came from the Trotskyist tradition within the American Socialist Party. They led these new young students into the Civil Rights Movement, where they worked with SNCC and CORE[8] to organize mass sit-ins against segregation and voting drives to register juridically disenfranchised southern black people to vote. The coup de grace of this organizing came in 1963, when Bayard Rustin organized two days of mass protest in the nation's capital: the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom."

But triumph comes before the fall. In 1964, the U.S. was swept into a presidential election. The incumbent Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson against Barry Goldwater. Deep in the Jim Crow South, activists in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party had organized alternative meetings and votes to put forward delegates, including a significant number of black delegates, for the upcoming Democratic National Convention, in defiance of the Dixiecrats' segregated, white-only Democratic Party. When these delegates were denied seats at the 1964 DNC[9] in Atlantic City, they left to boycott the convention and hold an alternative convention. When LBJ announced that no *future* DNC would be segregated, Bayard Rustin, the hero of 1963, now scared of the "Right-wing threat" coming from Barry Goldwater (sound familiar?) urged the delegation to take the deal. But Bayard Rustin had another point — any protest of the DNC would only be a sham independence, so why not be honest and enter the party within which one is already working? Feeling angry and betrayed, the delegation refused, and "black power" was born.

Within youth organizations like SNCC and SDS, this transformed into the belief that white and black radicals would have to organize separately since the white radicals did not face the same oppression and could not be trusted to support the radical demands of the movement. Bayard Rustin criticized the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Development and the beginnings of these developments in his 1965 article, "From Protest to Politics." Carl Davidson and Greg Calvert of the SDS's new "Praxis Axis" countered this article with their own slogan, "From Protest to Resistance," calling for base building and resistance to U.S. imperialism rather than the old social-democratic strategy. Greg Calvert had picked up the slogan of "resistance" from his time in Tunis with the Algerian resistance to French imperialism. The Praxis Axis looked to the "New Working Class" of black workers, students, and women to supplant the traditional working-class focus on the Left and provide a new revolutionary force.

Mark Rudd's Columbia SDS of 1968 was a product of this earlier history. Mark Rudd was highly critical of this new Praxis Axis which was the majority tendency of SDS ahead of the 1968 protests, writing that, "Though possessing a 'Marxist' analysis, they believed that the way support is gained is by going out to people and talking to them about this analysis."[10] When a Colonel from the Select Service Committee running the draft was scheduled to speak at Columbia, the Praxis Axis majority voted to attend the talk and "ask probing questions." This was not enough for Rudd and his emerging opposition. They decided action was necessary, so as the Colonel was speaking, they landed a pie squarely in his face.

This new "radical" wing of the SDS called itself the Action Faction and sought to promote direct action through occupations and confrontations. Spurred by the occupation of Hamilton Hall by the Student Afro-American Society, the SDS called on the general student body to occupy campus and Low Library, which culminated in the police arrest of 1,000 protesting students after the disruption of classes for a week.

This action sparked similar protests across the world. In "Three Student Risings" (1968), Fawthorp, Nairn, and Triesman describe the occupation of three universities in Great Britain. The demands of these occupations are what is broadly described as "student power," which included greater student control over universities and education under capitalism. This raised the question of the relationship of the university and the students to society as a whole. The three wrote:

> Universities are linked to a set of productivity norms which, in order to be met, need a system as authoritarian as any other factory. Expose that, by linking it with outside repressive forces . . . and the first cracks will appear in the façade. When the outside insists on coming inside, we will know two things. One, we will lose; but the loss of "socialism on one campus" is inevitable and should stimulate support in all the others during the really hard struggle. Two, we will have won, because we will force the Administrations to openly show their relation to the capitalist machine, and the institutions' implicit aim of producing a new generation of managers to rule the working class.[11]

Recognizing the students as future managers of capitalism, they wonder if radical students can question the status quo and work for socialism while embracing that managerial role.

This was not a new problem, but had been a central part of the student protests and strikes of the 1930s, in which students had protested the destruction of academic freedom, labor suppression, the anti-communism of the academy, the authoritarian administration of the university, and the specter of a second world war and attendant draft. In the 1930s as in the 1960s, the students demanded action — radical action. The Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID), an important precursor to the SDS, wrote, "The radical movement has too many sideline commentators; the great need is for participants. Besides, action is one of the best ways of getting clarification."[12]

Members of the student movement of the 1930s Old Left fought over the importance of "student issues" and how to connect them to the outside world. The basis of their protest of the university was its role in the progressive state that had emerged since the First World War and their role as students in reproducing the Bonapartist state management of the working class. But it was unclear what it would mean to oppose such things. As FDR embarked on New Deal programs, courting the support of labor unions, and the Communist Party (a major influence on the young students) shifted towards a "Popular Front" strategy of alliance with capitalist politicians against the threat of fascism, the student movement broke apart. They were no longer able to justify an anti-war stance in opposition to FDR and the Democratic Party. Hal Draper, a major figure in the Brooklyn College protests of 1934, wrote that "After four years of eviscerating the student anti-war movement for the sake of the grand alliance against Nazism, the Second World War was inaugurated with the Hitler-Stalin Pact."[13] The students followed the Communist-led Popular Front into the Democratic Party and went all-in for Franklin Delano Roosevelt's *third* term. Draper declared, "The student movement was dead."

These arguments about the relationship of "student power" to society and the role of the student protests in capitalist politics were rehearsed in the 1968 student protests. Mark Rudd was not sanguine about the "student power" wing of the protests, writing, "Th[e] student powerization of the Columbia rebellion and the New Left in general is an attempt on the part of the ruling class to de-fuse the social and political content of our Movement—rip its guts out, tear off its balls, and substitute some sort of faggoty, wimpy, tepid, 'we-love-your-system-but-it-needs-reform,' McCarthyite gook in its place."[14] McCarthyite here refers to Eugene McCarthy, an anti-war candidate in the Democratic Party running against LBJ in the primary that year.

The New Left radicals of 1968 were facing again the problems and questions that had been posed to the Old Left in the 1930s. How does a student work towards the socialist revolution? What is socialism? How should the Left relate to capitalist parties like the Democratic Party? How do students relate to the working class? Should one be "anti-fascist" or "anti-imperialist"? The young Leftists saw the history laid out before them — the betrayal of the communists and the liquidation of the radicals into a Popular Front strategy, the institutionalization of revolution to support the neverending march of capitalism — and they resented it.

Rudi Dutschke, a leader of the SDS and student protests in Germany, believed that the last 50 years of the German workers' movement from 1918 to 1968 were a "chain of betrayals by leftist and rightist intellectuals."[15]

In the theses of protesting students from the Sorbonne, they write: "Let us not allow our goals to be assimilated as those of the proletariat have been."[16]

Daniel and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit in their essay on the May student uprisings in Paris, specify this "assimilation." They believed that the Bolshevik Revolution led to bureaucratization, and that contemporary Marxists of all stripes "look upon the proletariat as a mass that needs to be directed from above."[17] They identified this mistake in the creation of a Marxist party for socialism. The Cohn-Bendit brothers argued that Lenin, who in his famous pamphlet *What is to be Done?* (1902) said that consciousness must be brought to the proletariat from without, had thus condemned the proletarian revolution to failure. They saw the student action as a corrective to the party. They would not theorize consciousness and attempt to lead the workers through the constitution of a party. Rather, they would "encourage the workers to struggle on their own behalf, and show how their every struggle can be used to drive a wedge into capitalist society."[18]

Dutschke also pointed back to the failure of the Marxist revolutionaries and parties of the early 20th century, who had betrayed the workers in 1914 when they voted in favor of war credits, beginning WWI and sending the proletarians of all countries to fight each other in imperialist war instead of making the international revolution. At the time, the Marxist leaders of the Second International Social Democratic Parties argued that they had to support the war because they would lose the support of the working-class majority if they did not. In so doing, they sacrificed what Dutschke calls the "historic interest of the producers" for their immediate interests.[19]

Student protests were seen as a historically specific corrective to this defeat and failure of the Marxist Left. For Dutschke, the "historically correct limitation of our action to the university should not be made into a fetish."[20] In the students, as in the "lumpen proletariat" of the Third World, the immediate interest was the same as the historic interest. Theory could be derived directly from the needs and actions of the present, with no need for a party or a group of intellectuals to mediate the problem.

Historically, Marxists argued for the merger of socialist intellectuals with the working-class movement in an independent socialist party. In this party, a socialist politics would be developed through theoretical and practical struggle. The radicals of 1968, seeing that this was not happening, sought to sidestep the question of forming a party by promoting the unity of action between the students and the oppressed of the Third World.

But this emphasis on "spontaneity" was only the flipside of the "organization" the Stalinists had held up when they kicked out the intellectuals and liquidated the historical Bolshevik Party and Communist International in the name of supporting "socialism in one country." Both jettison the dialectic in favor of a one-sided actionism. The dialectical tension between spontaneity and organization, between theory and practice, between the workers and intellectuals, which the Marxist party for socialism had sought to work through, is lost.

The students of the 1968 protests hoped that through radical action and support for the "oppressed," they could overcome their role as intellectuals stuck in the tired debates they inherited from the Old Left and join with a truly revolutionary practice. In this way, they believed they would overcome the crimes and betrayals of Stalinism and the socialists of the past.

They called for action, not thought. As the Cohn-Bendits write:

> Between us we can change this rotten society. Now, put on your coat and make for the nearest cinema. Look at their deadly love-making on the screen. Isn't it better in real life? Make up your mind to learn to love. Then, during the interval, when the first adverts come on, pick up your tomatoes, or if you prefer, your eggs, and chuck them. Then get out into the street, and peel off all the latest government proclamations until underneath you discover the message of the days of May and June. Stay awhile in the street. Look at the passers-by and say to yourself: the last word has not yet been said. *Then act*. Act with others, not for them. Make the revolution here and now. It is your own.[21]

So the students acted in 1968 and their confrontation with police batons and bullets made national headlines. But the tragedy of the Spring gave way to the farce of the Summer. At the 1968 DNC, anti-war candidate Eugene McCarthy ceded the nomination to Humphrey, LBJ's former Vice President. Outside the gates of the convention, the students of 68 were burning their bras and shouting in protest. Inside the convention, Bayard Rustin, that old hero of the Civil Rights Movement, was working the floor for Humphrey to stop the looming "fascist threat" of Richard Nixon.[22]

But they wouldn't have to remain outside for long. In 1972 for the nomination of New Left favorite George McGovern, student radicals would be invited inside. He even set up racial, gender, and age quotas to ensure that the Democratic Party was representing these young rebels adequately. The "radical street protests" of four years earlier became a new popular-front strategy going all in to stop the evil Richard Nixon. Those who were left out became sectarian Marxists, anarchists, and even terrorists. 1968 was not the birth of the New Left, but its death. Not its greatest success, but the final protest against its failure before its accommodation to a new reality.

Earlier this year, thousands of youth wrote "Ceasefire" onto ballots for the Democratic Party primaries that aren't. The radical protests that we see today are the Democratic primary that was canceled for the coronation of Genocide Joe, and Palestine is Bernie Sanders, now that Bernie is all in for Biden. Their slogan is not freedom, nor even less revolution, but martyrdom. What does the Left care for martyrdom? And yet the avowedly "Marxist" and "socialist" Left lauds the protests as a new revolutionary moment. The protests will denounce the crimes of capitalism, and some may even "resist" to their last breath, even when the crowds have all gone home, but for what? What will these actions have to do with socialism? What does it have to do with Marxism? We see already that, just as Adorno warned the New Left, the protests have inaugurated the new regime of censorship and bureaucratic management that the students denounce. Could it not be the case that, like the New Left the students copy, they will become their opposite — a New Right — and that all the radical phrases, happenings, and confrontation will only prepare the very capitalist domination they seek to oppose? What time is it on the historical clock? Maybe, when we look ahead to what we hope is a new future, we will just see Theodor Adorno, looking over his shoulder and winking at us.

We are repeating history, but without the political content of the New Left crisis, which forced young people to reconsider their relationship to historical Marxism. Today, protests copy all the effects of 1968, but not a word is said about its relationship to history. In the face of seeming repetition, one may want to say something, to stop our peers from going down the path of the past, but it's far too late for that. This repetition has already happened. Today, the task of the socialist revolution and reconstituting an emancipatory politics has already been abandoned by the Millennials in favor of working within the progressive state and the Democratic Party. One either goes along with it or protests the *fait accompli*.

In 1914, Rosa Luxemburg wrote that the world was faced with two-alternatives: socialism or barbarism. Today we live in the aftermath of the failed revolution for socialism, which has left us with nothing except for barbarism. In barbarism, humanity is a "will-less football." But Rosa Luxemburg wrote that there was still hope, "if we have not unlearned how to learn."

Unable to understand the historical meaning of our own activity, we liquidate our only hope for changing our condition in the name of an "action" which may be completely amenable to the continuation of capitalism to the Greek *kalends*[23]. Nobody believes that the protests will end the war. They just want to do *something*, *anything* in the face of the horror. But suppression of the task of socialism in the name of "radical action" will only kick the can down the road to another generation, making the avowed Left the allies of continued regression and the progenitors of new obstacles to freedom. The only possible consolation would be the conscious recognition that the action was meaningless. Today, we have unlearned how to learn. Can we learn it again? |P

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[1] Erin Hagood, "SDS and the legacy of the New Left today," *Platypus Review* 153 (February 2023), available online at <https://platypus1917 org/2023/02/01/sds-and-the-legacy-of-the-new-left today/>.

[2] See Atiya Khan, "1968," in Spencer Leonard, Atiya Khan, Richard Rubin, and Chris Cutrone, "The decline of the Left in the 20th century: Toward a theory of historical regression," *Platypus Review* 17 (November 2009), available online at <https://platypus1917 org/category/pr/issue-17/>; and Theodor W. Adorno, "Marginalia to Theory and Practice" (1969), in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 263.

[3] Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, "Correspondence on the German Student Movement" (1969), trans. Esther Leslie, *New Left Review* 233 (January/February 1999): 123–36, available online at <https://www.marcuse.org/herbertpublications/1960s/1969-correspondence-on-the german-student-movement.html>.

[4] Khan, "1968."

[5] [Latin] Reason, calculation, procedure, etc. On this usage, see Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament," in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 75–86.

[6] Mark Rudd, "Columbia—Notes on the Spring Rebellion," in *The New Left Reader*, ed. Carl Ogelsby (New York: Grove Press, 1969), 297.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Congress of Racial Equality.

[9] Democratic National Convention.

[10] Rudd, "Columbia," 292.

[11] Tom Fawthorp, Tom Nairn, and David Triesman, "Three Student Risings," in *The New Left Reader*, 289.

[12] Hal Draper, "The Student Movement of the Thirties: A Political History" (1965), available online at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/draper/1965xx/student30s.htm>.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Rudd, "Columbia," 300.

[15] Rudi Dutschke, "On Anti-authoritarianism," in *The New Left Reader*, 249.

[16] "The Appeal from the Sorbonne: The open assembly of June 13–14, 1968," in *The New Left Reader*, 272.

[17] Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, "The Battle of the Streets: 'C'est Pour Toi Que Tu Fais La Révolution,'" in *The New Left Reader*, 261.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Dutschke, "On Anti-authoritarianism," 245–46.

[20] Ibid., 249.

[21] Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, "The battle of the streets," 266, emphasis added.

[22] See Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America: A Complete History* (Lincoln: Potomac Books, 2015).

[23] [Latin] The first day of the month of the Roman calendar. With no corresponding day in the Greek calendar, waiting for it — *ad kalendas graecas* — amounts to waiting forever.